

SUBMITTING EVIDENCE TO A SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE

DATA PROTECTION FORM

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Date:	23/8/18
Organisation: (if required)	Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges
Topic of submission:	Challenges associated with implementation of the Climate Change Bill

I have read and understood the privacy notice about submitting evidence to a Committee.

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Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill

SUBMISSION FROM Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges representing Further and Higher Education Sustainability Professionals

About the EAUC

We exist to lead and empower the post-16 education sector to make sustainability 'just good business'. Our vision is to create a world with sustainability at its heart.

The membership of the EAUC comprises Higher and Further Educational institutions, with a combined budget of some £25 billion, responsible for educating over 2 million students supported by half a million staff.

We have regional and country chapters, with member institutions connected deeply with business, industry, health and civic bodies at local levels, with reach internationally via their research, innovation and student mobility.

Our Scotland Office is funded by the Scottish Funding Council to support all universities and colleges to develop a skilled and informed whole-institutional approach to leadership around carbon and resource management, social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

We believe

- That UK and Irish education should be a global leader in sustainability
- That educational institutions have a responsibility as anchors in their communities to be agents of change
- That education has a unique opportunity to transform lives and communities
- That education is at the heart of global sustainability
- That every student should have access to sustainability education
- That education should reflect best practice in operational sustainability
- In being flexible and adaptable to find solutions for a resilient future
- In the value of international collaboration

Challenges associated with implementation of the Bill

The EAUC members who fed into this consultation response are passionate about the Scottish Government setting targets and making plans which ensure Scotland takes a leading role in reducing emissions, and doing so in a way which benefits Scottish society. Throughout this response the representatives considered the challenges associated with the implementation of the Bill for the Further and Higher Education Sector.

Universities and colleges must be both encouraged and enabled to play their part as:

- 1) Owners and operators of large estates
- 2) Educators of the workforce of the future and the leaders in 2050
- 3) Places of innovation and research.

Owners and operators of large estates

The Further and Higher Education sector have large estates which they develop, maintain and manage. Every opportunity will need to be taken to improve the efficiency of the estates. More ambitious projects requiring major infrastructure changes will also need to be implemented to enable institutions to play their role meeting the targets. Many institutions do not have the funding and resources to maximise the efficiency of their estates or for large scale infrastructure work, and therefore investment will be one of the key challenges for the sector. The classification of the Further Education sector means that they are restricted in what funds they can access; creating barriers for estate improvements and substantially restricting carbon reductions. Once buildings and energy technologies are invested in they remain operational for a prolonged period, so the importance of investing now in low carbon technologies, or those which can be adapted to be so, needs greater emphasis. For the sector particular challenges are likely to be the decarbonisation of heat, meaning low carbon heat sources are of great interest, and balancing the need for growth in student numbers and estates with the productivity and efficiency of estates buildings and processes.

Educators of the workforce of the future and the leaders in 2050

FHEIs have a key role here in training and educating students to high environmentally-responsible and ethical standards across all subject areas, as well as in developing innovative ideas for the future. For Further and Higher Education institutions to effectively play their part in reducing their own emissions and ensuring their students are developing the skills and knowledge they need, more pressure is needed from the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council on institutional leaders and decision makers. Students will be working in a very different society and economy if a 90% emissions reduction target is to be achieved; therefore institutions should be equipping students with the skills and knowledge that will be required to contribute towards a low carbon Scotland.

Universities and colleges also have an important role to play in increasing the carbon literacy within both our own communities and within society as a whole. Scotland requires a more joined-up approach to addressing the challenge of climate change; with more support for local communities to make meaningful changes in their energy production, materials use and adaptation planning. The Further and Higher Education sector have a central role in facilitating this.

Tertiary education institutions should also be encouraged to think realistically about how a 90% emissions reduction target will disrupt their own business model, and the actions they can take now to minimise risks. Those leading on governance and functions of the institutions should set an example and reflect the qualities which are expected of students to be global citizens in coming years; this should also be extended to the work of staff in all areas of the organisations. Consistency is also needed from the Scottish Government in their policy position to aid this. Sustainable economic growth has to be done in a sustainable manner, and decisions with the potential to greatly increase carbon emissions (such as reducing air passenger duty, or grant funding for researchers requiring international travel) should not be approved.

A key challenge for Further and Higher Educational institutions at the moment is the plethora of different priorities placed on them by the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council, meaning sustainable behaviours may not get the prominence they deserve. Constrained resources mean institutions focus on the more mainstream elements

of learning. The Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council must be consistent in their approach, and make it clear to senior leaders within Scotland's Universities and Colleges that they have a core responsibility to both take action to reduce emissions and ensure their institutions are actively supporting society to develop the knowledge and skills for a low carbon world.

Places of innovation and research

The sector see action on climate change as a creative, innovative, questioning, enterprising opportunity. It is believed that there is more scope to link the research and innovation of institutions to real-life scenarios researching targets, emissions, social impacts and planning for a clean energy economy. For example, environmental action must be integrated into wider economic planning and reform of our systems. Further and Higher Education institutions provide the ideal place to research these changes, and educate future working generations on these practices.

Can target setting be considered without also considering what action will be required to meet them?

It is the belief of the sector that the Scottish Government should demonstrate leadership by setting a net-zero Greenhouse Gas emissions target now, even though at this stage this exceeds the level that the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee can map as a clear pathway. Sector representatives indicated that targets, on both a national as well sector scale, are needed to provide drive and accountability on the journey to achieving the 90% emissions reduction target, and the net-zero emissions target in future. The target is for the next 32 years, and so if the Scottish Government sets a 'stretch' target, then there is much more pressure to innovate to produce the desired results. Setting a target within the bounds of current abilities is overly restrictive, and, given the scale of the challenge of climate change, to adopt this approach will almost certainly result in our failure. Action on Climate Change and a reduction in carbon emissions is needed immediately. Statutory targets will provide a motivation for this agenda, making it a priority for everyone throughout the Further and Higher Institutions as well as in wider society. Further still, targets and monitoring based on consumption emissions would be an expected next step if Scotland is to truly take responsibility for its own impacts around the world.

There is potential for the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting process to be aligned with these new targets, making it clear in the expectations on Public Bodies what part they are expected to play in emissions reductions, and how well they are performing. There may be a role for sector-specific emissions targets, e.g. public sector, with the Further and Higher Education Sector welcoming this approach. Consideration should be given as to whether public sector carbon reduction targets should be aligned with those for the country as a whole, and the role of individual public sector bodies within that.

The Further and Higher Education system is currently based on carbon-intensive patterns of student and researcher travel, and includes a large number of under-maintained and unsustainable estates. Both the Funding Council and tertiary education sector need to be involved in a frank discussion about the priorities going forward, and how the sector can be enabled and encouraged to effectively play their vital role in the transition to a low carbon economy.

Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges has submitted these views on behalf of Sustainability Professional representatives from the Further & Higher Education Sector, with contributions from:

- Borders College
- City of Glasgow College
- Edinburgh Napier University
- Fife College
- Glasgow Kelvin College
- Glasgow School of Art
- South Lanarkshire College
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Glasgow
- University of St Andrews